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MECHANIZED RIFLE TROOP (M113) (U) ✓
Interim Test Report Number 9
1-31 October 1963

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THOMAS O. BLAKENEY
Colonel, Armor
Chief


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I (C) SUMMARY

During the period 1-31 October 1963 three of the four ARVN corps reported increased activity by M113 troops, with the greatest increase in the IV Corps area. Narrative reports of operations in the IV Corps area are contained in Sections II, III, and IV of this report.

In the II Corps area M113 operations have been generally limited to platoon strength. This employment permits greater dispersion of the vehicles and decreased reaction time in relieving besieged hamlets. This tactic has been successful in the II Corps area because insurgent strength is not concentrated there. In the areas of III and IV Corps, where the insurgent forces are of battalion strength, such dispersion of forces and loss of unit integrity is believed inadvisable.

The previously reported increased insurgent attention to means of defeating the M113s gains substance with the increased numbers of 57mm recoilless rifles encountered. In addition, the reported introduction of 40mm antiaircraft weapons reflects still further attention to means of defeating the mechanized units. (See Annex A.) Ammunition reported with this weapon indicates intention of dual-purpose employment.

The non-trafficability of pineapple fields and the necessity for maintenance of trafficability maps are supported by observations of the HO PHONG operation. (See Section II, following.) With this exception, the M113 continues to evidence an ability to operate freely in the areas desired.

The use of helicopters (preferably UH-1B) in conjunction with M113 troops should be exploited. (See Section II, following.)

Delay in assaulting known insurgent positions results in excessive friendly casualties and permits the escape of the insurgent forces. (See Sections III and IV.) Air strikes and artillery bombardment should be on an "on-call" basis. Habitual employment of air and artillery on the objective area prior to ground assault degrades the effectiveness of the assault.

A description of test units, discussion of test objectives, and operational plan of test are contained in previous test reports. Annex B of this report is an account of the terminal action on an M113 destroyed in the vicinity of Go Cong on 9 September 1963. (See Interim Test Report Number 8.) Annex C shows changes in III and IV Corps boundaries effective 1 November 1963.

The test is considered to be 80 percent complete.

I-Summary

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II (C) OPERATION HO PHONG

A. (U) INTRODUCTION

The 5th Mechanized Rifle Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as the 5/2) participated in a search-and-clear operation in the vicinity of Ho Phong (WR 4021) in Ba Xuyen Province on 10 October 1963. Other units participating and the plan of the operation are as shown in Figure 1, following.

In this report no effort is made to record operational times involved, as such times would be irrelevant.

B. (C) NARRATIVE

Immediately after crossing the LD, the 5/2 encountered difficulty in negotiating pineapple fields. Approximately two hours were lost in this location. (This delay should not have occurred, as both the troop commander and the US Advisor had been previously warned that the consistency of the soil in pineapple fields is such that immediate bogging is to be expected.)

After recovering all vehicles, the 5/2 proceeded on the assigned axis. Immediately north of Ho Phong, insurgents were observed running across the rice paddies, and the M113s pursued. (Later interrogation of prisoners revealed that the insurgents had been attending classes of instruction when the M113s entered the area.) Although there were many insurgents in the area, few were captured (1 KIA, 13 captured). The insurgents showed a high degree of skill in avoiding the attacking force. This was accomplished through breaking into small groups (1-6) and employing the camouflage of the rice paddies.

At this time, this observer was over the action in a UH-1B. Insurgents disrobed to blend with the muddy waters of the rice paddies and covered themselves with rice straw or seaweed-type plants that were immediately available. A man so camouflaged blends into the rice paddy area and is practically invisible from the ground or the top of an M113. However, from the helicopter the tracks in the muddy water pointed as an arrow to individual locations, i.e., the camouflaged man would be at the head of the arrow. Upon locating a camouflaged insurgent, the helicopter hovered immediately over him. The insurgent was then ordered to move out to the carriers or, if he feigned unconsciousness, he was picked up by the M113s or dismounted troops. The UH-1B departed the area after dropping this observer with the M113s. The air observation was then taken over by an O-1 aircraft. The O-1 was effective in spotting the running VC and pointing out routes for the M113s; however, it lacks the versatility of the helicopter in leading the attacking troops directly into the insurgent hiding positions and forcing the insurgents into exposed positions. This was fully demonstrated on occasions wherein the O-1 would spot the insurgents and dive to mark the location. The insurgents

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immediately entered the many canals in the area and submerged among the reeds. By staying under water and using reeds to breathe through, the insurgents escaped detection by the O-1s and the M113 troops. Had the helicopter remained with the M113s, the majority of the insurgents who escaped in this manner could have been captured. Further, many insurgents lying camouflaged in the rice paddies could not be seen by the O-1. This was amply demonstrated on several occasions when the insurgents were in danger of being crushed by the advancing M113s and rose to surrender. These individuals were not seen by the O-1 or, in most cases, the M113 troops until they stood up. The helicopter with its hovering capability facilitates detection and capture under these circumstances.

On one occasion 11 insurgents were seen to enter a canal approximately 1 km in front of the M113s. The 5/2 immediately moved to this location but was unable to find any of the insurgents known to be hiding within a 50-yard radius. The use of grenades or demolitions to bring the insurgents to the surface was suggested, but no action was taken. After a short search of the area the M113 troops continued to Objective 2. No insurgents were found at Objective 2, and the troops halted for lunch and awaited orders.

Orders received at approximately 1530 directed the unit to move to Objective 3 and then to home station. This movement was accomplished without incident.

C. (C) COMMENT

This action is considered significant in that it represents the first employment of the M113s in this area during the wet season. Although the 5/2 has been in the Bac Lieu area for approximately four months, the unit has been employed only for airfield security. This circumstance resulted from the ARVN 21st Division's mistaken belief that the M113s could not operate in the flooded rice paddies. Only after personal efforts of US representatives were the M113s employed on a combat operation.

D. (C) OBSERVATIONS

1. Previous observations that pineapple fields are non-trafficable and to be avoided are supported by difficulties experienced on this operation.. Trafficability maps must be maintained.

2. The ability of the M113 to operate over the same areas as the water buffalo is further supported by the terrain negotiated on this operation. (See Figures 2 through 17, following.) Actually, in many cases the M113 traversed inundated areas impassable to and avoided by the water buffalo.

3. The use of helicopters (UH-1B) in conjunction with M113 operations should be habitual. With the helicopters operating as an integral part of the mechanized force, a marked increase in numbers of insurgents captured could be realized. The downdraft of the helicopter hovering over the submerged insurgents, blowing the reeds and rolling the water forces the insurgent to surface for air. When these tactics do not produce desired results, demolitions (grenades) should be used.

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Figure 2 (U)
Aerial view of a portion of the operational area. Area is completely inundated.

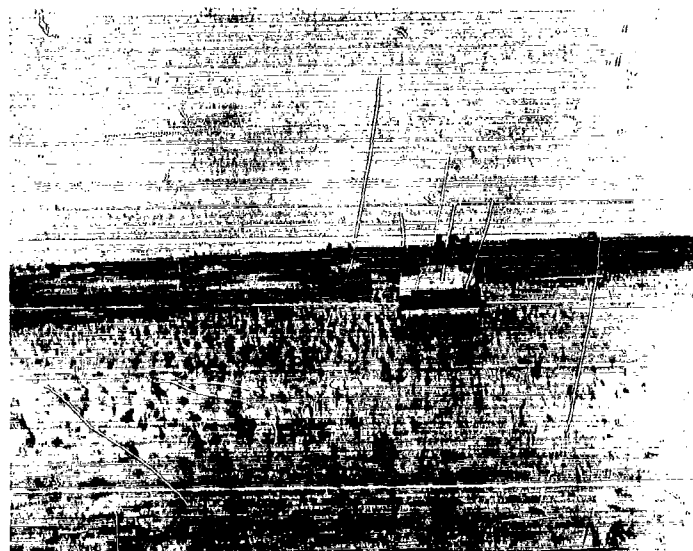


Figure 3 (U)
M113s in column enter the operational area

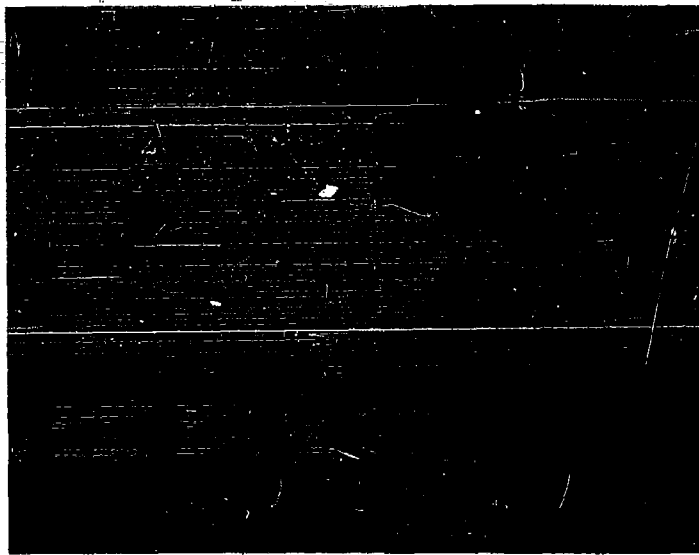


Figure 4 (U)
VC observed running. M113s deploy and pursue.

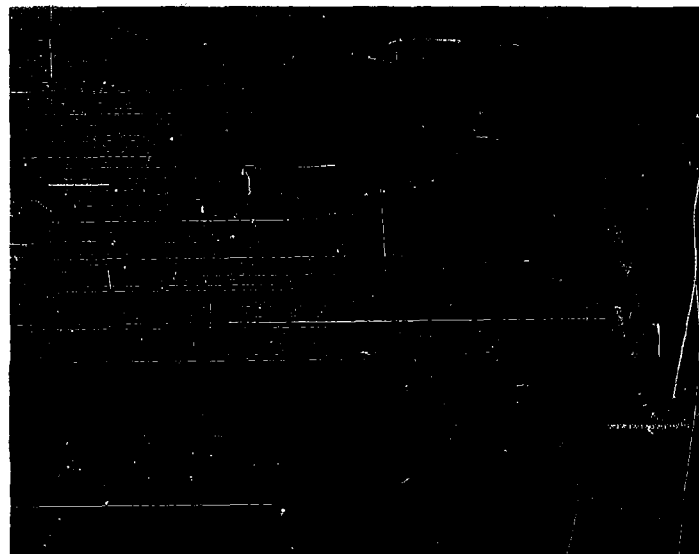


Figure 5 (U)
M113s deployed for search of rice paddies.

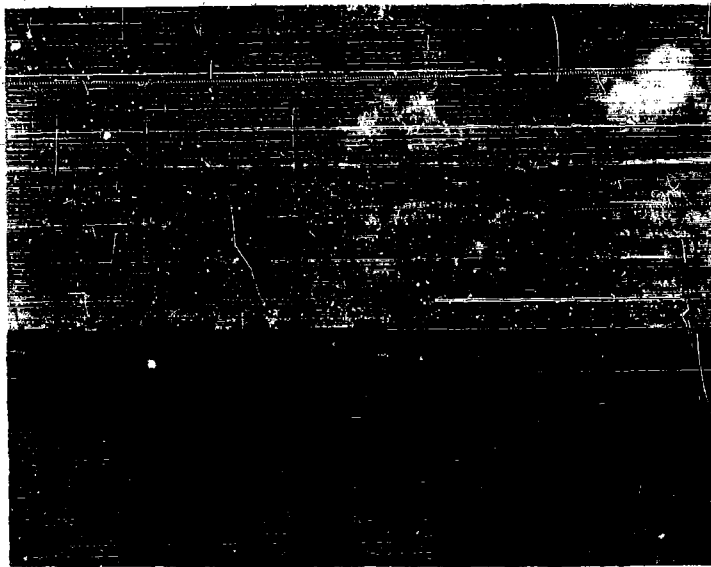


Figure 6 (U)
UH-1B spots VC in rice paddy and hovers as M113 moves in for capture.

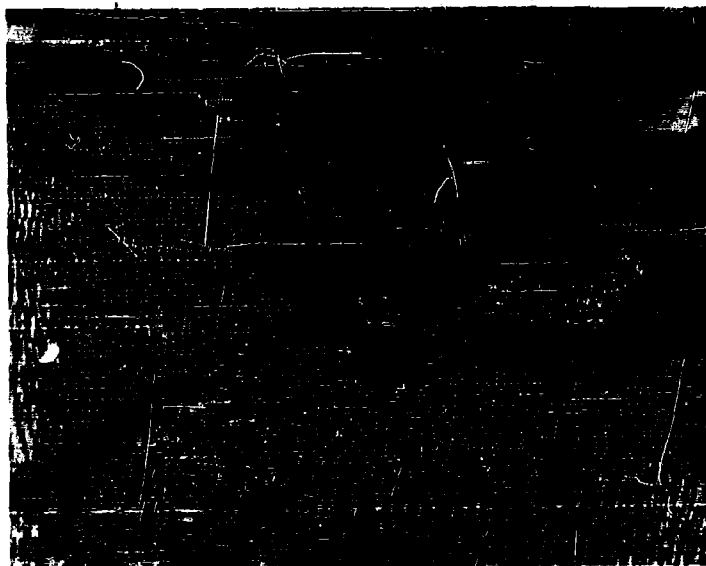


Figure 7 (U)
Dismounted soldiers search for VC hiding in area.
Three prisoners were seized in this pond.



Figure 8 (U)
Like the water buffalo.

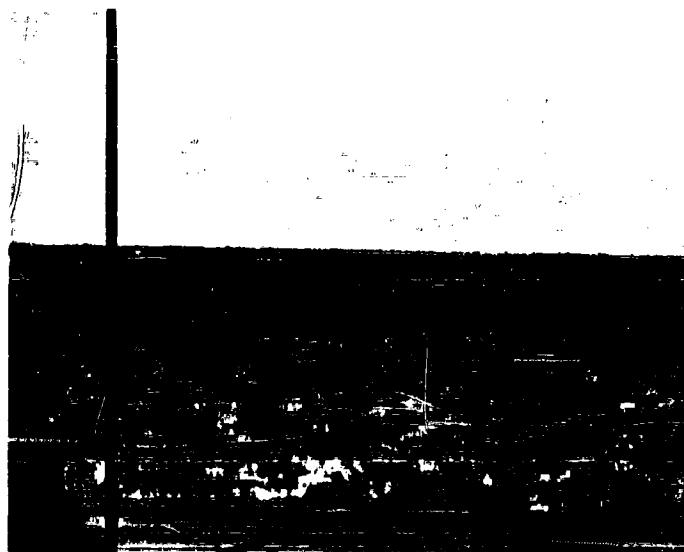


Figure 9 (U)



Figure 10 (U)
Captured VC prisoner is clutching wounded hand.



Figure 11 (U)
This prisoner rose from hiding to avoid being run over by advancing M113.

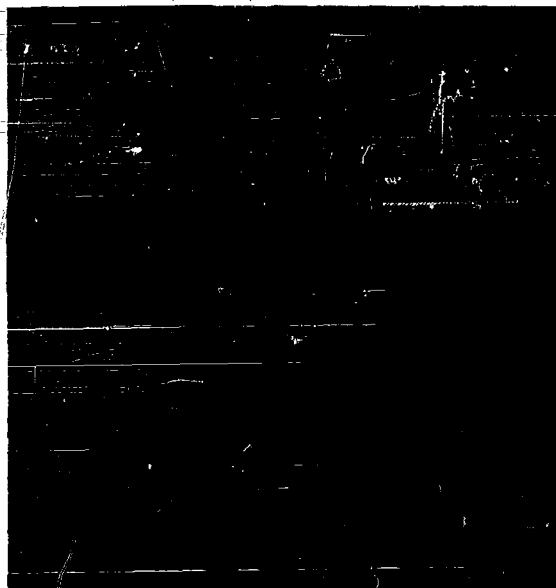


Figure 12 (U)
Timber used as push-bar to assist lead M113 in exiting canal.

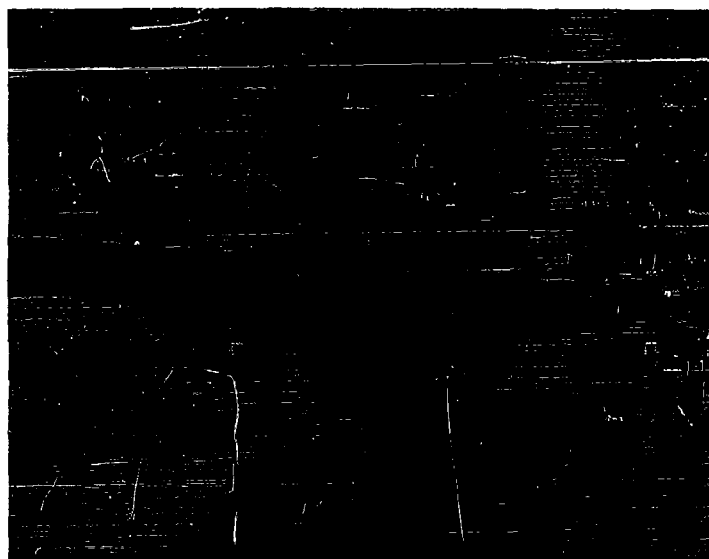


Figure 13 (U)
Lead vehicle across. Will tow pushing vehicle to firm footing.



Figure 14 (U)
Radio operator transmitted and copied almost constantly. No effect of
extreme heat noted. Temperature approximately 100 degrees on top of M113.

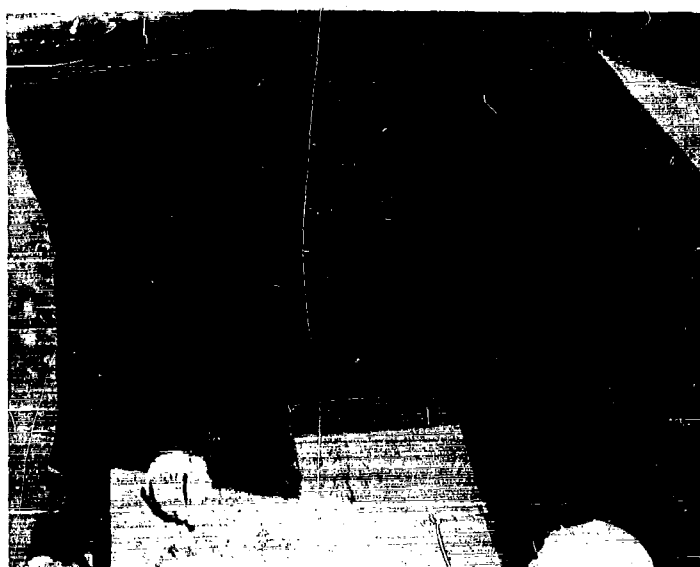


Figure 15 (U)

II - Ho Phong
II - Ho Phong

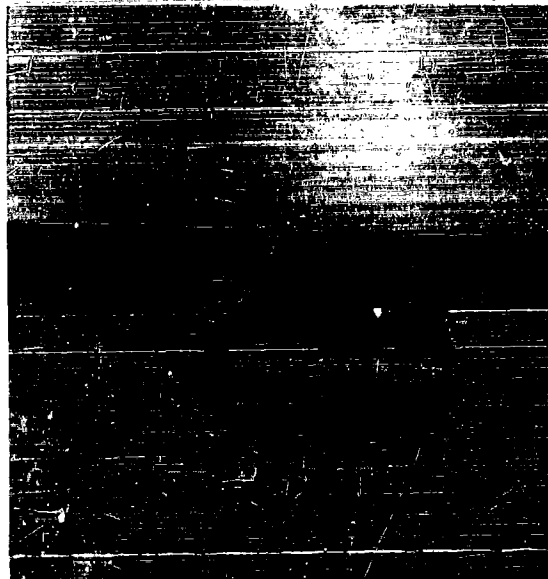


Figure 16 (U)
M113 performance in rice paddy.



Figure 17 (U)

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III (C) OPERATION NINH QUOI

A. (U) INTRODUCTION

The 5th Mechanized Troop, 2nd Armored Cavalry Squadron participated in an operation in the vicinity of Ninh Quoi during the period 23-24 October 1963. Other participating units were the 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment and the 21st Division Recon Platoon (attached to the 5th Mechanized Troop). Artillery and air support was available on call. An O-1 aircraft was used as a "spotter" for the mechanized troop. An "eagle flight" consisting of 5 armed UH-1B helicopters and 7 troop carrying UH-1Bs was available for reinforcement if required. The operation was planned and executed by the 21st Infantry Division.

Figure 18, page 22, shows the area of operation of the mechanized troop.

The mission was to attack and seize Objective 2 and be prepared to continue attack on order. Results of the operation were as follows:

1. Friendly losses: KIA - none
WIA - none
other - none
2. Enemy losses: POW - 12
KIA - 1 probable
3. Material captured: none

B. (C) NARRATIVE

The following comments pertain only to the 5th Mechanized Troop, 2nd Armored Cavalry Squadron. The times and events were recorded by an observer from the Ground Mobility Section of the Army Concept Team in Vietnam (ACTIV) who accompanied the troop throughout the operation.

At 1400 on 22 October 1963, the G3 Section, 21st Infantry Division was notified by the forward CP of the 21st Division at Camau to alert the American Advisor and the CO of the 5th Mechanized Troop to be at the Bac Lieu airstrip at 1500 to meet a U-6A aircraft that would take them on an aerial reconnaissance of an area northwest of Bac Lieu. The U-6A was provided by ACTIV. The aircraft arrived on schedule, and this time the troop CO was briefed on the route to be flown and the general scheme of an operation to be conducted the following day.

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The aerial reconnaissance was completed by 1600 and the aircraft landed at Camau. At this time the troop CO reported to the division CP (G3) for further instructions. At 1645 the division advisor recommended that an additional reconnaissance be conducted over an alternate area. When this reconnaissance was completed the U-6A aircraft delivered the troop commander to the Bac Lieu airstrip where he was met by an O-1 aircraft and flown back to the division forward CP for further verbal orders. The troop commander returned to his unit in Bac Lieu at about 2000. No written order or overlay was provided at this time. However, arrangements were made to air drop an overlay-type order to the unit on the following day.

At 0500 the following morning the 5th Mechanized Troop departed from Bac Lieu enroute to the objective area. A complement of 197 men and 14 armored personnel carriers composed the force. There were 117 men organic to the troop; 80 men from the division reconnaissance platoon were attached. The first hour of the road march was conducted under blackout drive conditions.

At 0600 the troop halted in a small village where an artillery unit was based. At this time the troop commander received orders that his unit was to escort two 105mm guns into a firing position, since both units were proceeding on the same route. Two M-8 armored cars had been made available to the artillery unit as escorts. The prime movers for the artillery were placed at the head of the column. After moving about 3 km, the 2½-ton trucks that were towing the artillery became stuck several times. This caused the armored unit to be delayed. It was reported that the artillery never reached its assigned position. At 0730 an O-1 aircraft dropped the operations overlay to the troop CO.

The unit reached Vinh Quoi at 0930 and encountered the first major canal. The troop commander elected to enter the canal (Point A) and swim the vehicles in a SW direction for approximately 2 km. The attached infantry was dismounted and provided local security along the canal banks. (See Figures 19 and 20.) An O-1 aircraft assisted in selecting an exit point on the NW bank of the canal. At 1045 the last M113 exited the canal (Point B) and movement commenced cross-country to the objective area. Several small canals were encountered but traversed without difficulty. Water depth in the rice paddies ranged from 3 to 4 feet. This water depth and mud did not pose a problem to the M113, which can maintain a speed of 8 to 15 mph under these conditions. (See Figures 21 and 22). The O-1 aircraft scouted ahead to select the best route.

At 1310, as the unit moved across a paddy field about 1500 meters from the objective (Point C), the unit commander was informed by the spotter aircraft that the paddy field was infested with VC. The insurgents could not be detected by the unit since they had submerged themselves in paddy water 3 to 4 feet deep. At this time the commander dispersed his vehicles in an effort to flush the VC. As the O-1 observer sighted the enemy he relayed their locations to the American advisor and troop commander. The M113s would pursue the VC. (See Figures 24, 25, and 26.) Utilizing this technique the M113 troops captured 12 VC and killed one.

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Although the troop was highly successful in pursuing the VC in the paddy field, orders were received at 1400 to disengage and continue to Objective 2 without delay. When this order was received, the unit was still capturing VC.

At 1410 two T-28 aircraft bombed, strafed, and dropped napalm on Objective 2.

At 1445 the 5th Troop crossed the final canal before the objective area. At 1450 all vehicles had crossed the canal. Three rifle platoons were deployed in a line formation and prepared to launch the attack. Distance to the objective area was about 900 meters.

Although the objective had been saturated by ordnance from the T-28 aircraft the troop commander was instructed at 1455 to hold in his position while artillery fire was placed on the objective area. At 1525 the troop was still located about 900 meters from the objective area in an assault posture. Instructions were received to remain in position while additional air strikes and artillery fire were delivered into the objective area. A radio message received at 1527 informed the troop commander that he was now under control of the 31st Infantry Regiment. The 1st Battalion, 31st Regiment was given the mission to seize Objective 1, which was located approximately 1000 meters west of Objective 2.

The T-28 air strike on Objective 2 was completed by 1530. The troop commander received orders to hold his present location while artillery fire was shifted from Objective 1 to Objective 2. The American advisor was informed through his channels that the artillery would not fire. However, the troop commander was informed that artillery would fire into the objective area.

At 1545 the troop commenced movement toward Objective 2. At 1547 artillery commenced fire into a tree line on the near side of Objective 2. About 15 to 20 rounds were fired. Their accuracy was good. The troop began to move toward the objective at 1550, but then halted on orders of the 31st Regiment. No reason could be given for the halt.

The final assault commenced at 1600, with assault elements (9 APCs) moving abreast with .50 Cal machine guns firing. (See Figures 28 and 29.) About 25 meters from the objective, the infantry dismounted and continued the attack into the tree line. No enemy fire was received. By 1630 the objective was secure. Several foxholes were found in the tree line. Local civilians reported that approximately 500 VC had vacated the area two days previously.

At 1640 the infantry returned to the M113s. The troop commander awaited further orders from the 31st Infantry Regiment. The troop commander received orders to occupy an assembly area (Point D) about 800 meters west of Objective 2.

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The unit remained overnight in this area. The infantry was dismounted and placed in a tree line to provide local security. Captured VC remained with the unit. The M113s formed a "wagon wheel" in the paddy field. Water depth was about 3 feet.

At 0700 on the morning of October 24, the troop commenced movement to Bac Lieu. The commander was careful not to follow the exact route that was used to enter the area.

At 1045 it was found that two M113s required fuel, and that all vehicles were running low on fuel. Two H-21 helicopters delivered several 5-gallon cans of gasoline to the troop. The gasoline was sling loaded, as shown in Figure 30. This replenishment allowed the troop to continue the march to a pre-designated refueling point.

At 1730 on 24 October the troop arrived at its home station, Bac Lieu. All vehicles were operational.

C. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

1. All M113s assigned to the unit were operational and participated in the operation.

2. Vehicle operators are well trained. This was especially noticeable while the unit moved under blackout conditions.

3. The entire troop and the attached unit were eager to engage the VC. This was detected when the first enemy contact was made.

4. The employment of the M113s by the troop commander was sound at all times.

5. The final assault had all appearances of a well rehearsed attack at one of the U S Army service schools.

6. The infantry dismounted and moved aggressively into the final phase of the assault.

7. There was little confusion within the troop during the entire operation.

8. Capt Tam, troop commander, is mature and aggressive. He is highly respected by his subordinates. At all times he had complete control of his unit. He accepts advice from his advisor in a willing manner.

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9. 1st Lt Hines, American advisor, has excellent relationship with his counterpart.

10. Excellent use was made of the O-1 spotter aircraft.

D. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

1. The troop should have moved several hours earlier than it did in order to reach the first major canal at Vinh Quoi by BMNT.

2. Although the troop was prepared to attack at 1450 it was held in an assault posture for 55 minutes while awaiting additional air strikes and artillery fire. This is a tactical error committed by higher headquarters. Had the objective been occupied as reported, the enemy would have had ample time to withdraw and disperse. Also, the speed, firepower, and shock action of the armored unit were lost.

3. An O-1 aircraft is an excellent means of guiding armored units over and around obstacles; however, when seeking out insurgents submerged in paddy fields, a helicopter is better since it may hover and pinpoint insurgent positions.

4. POWs should be evacuated with all possible speed. The 12 POWs remained with the unit for 27 hours.

5. It is believed that the engine timing of several M113s was inefficient. This may account for excessive use of fuel.

6. Armored units should not be required to provide security for artillery units when moving toward an attack position.

7. There was a definite lack of security during the hours of darkness. At 1030 the ACTIV observer noticed two M113s in which the entire crews were asleep. This was brought to the attention of the American advisor.

8. The current trend appears to be toward using air strikes and artillery bombardment before a final assault. Air and artillery strikes should be on an "on-call" basis and employed only as required.

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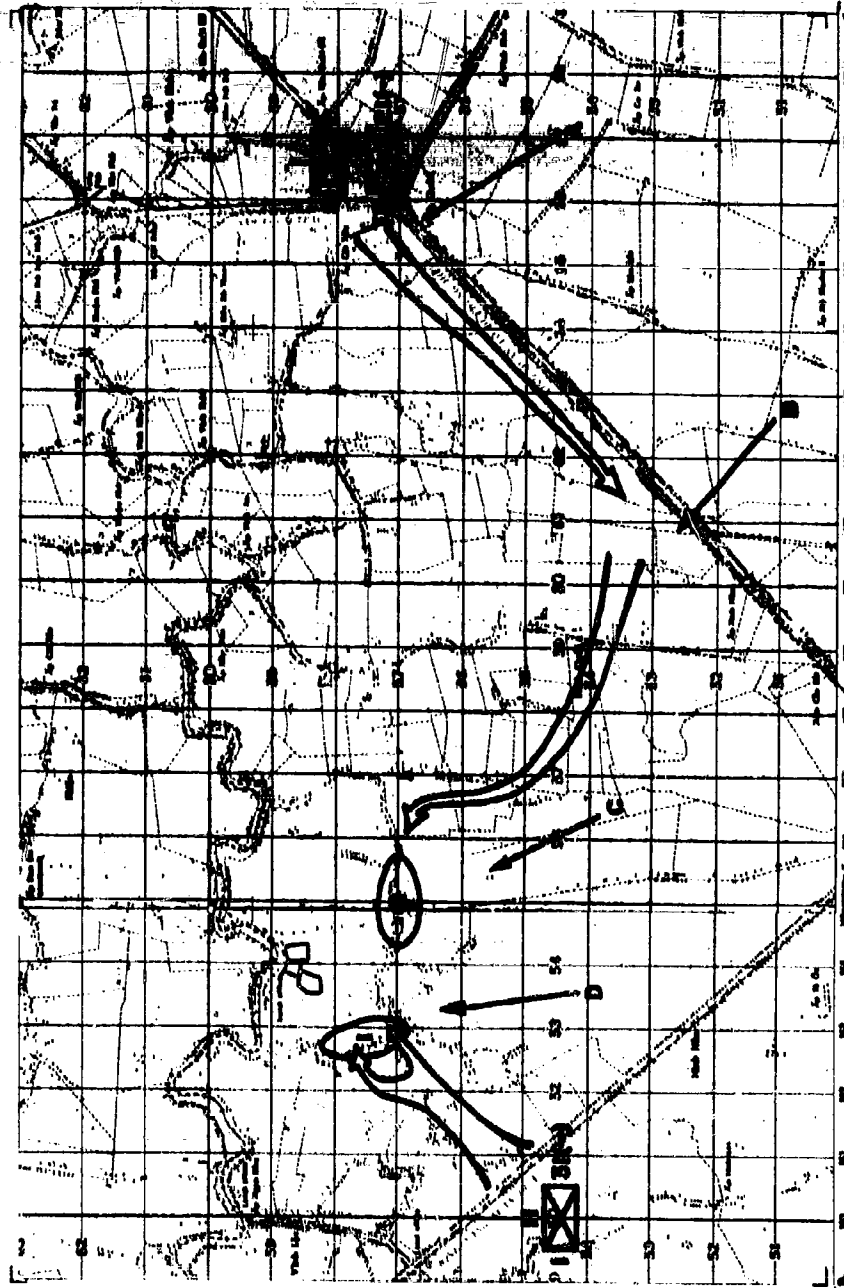


Figure 18
Operation Ninh Quoi

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Figure 19 (U)

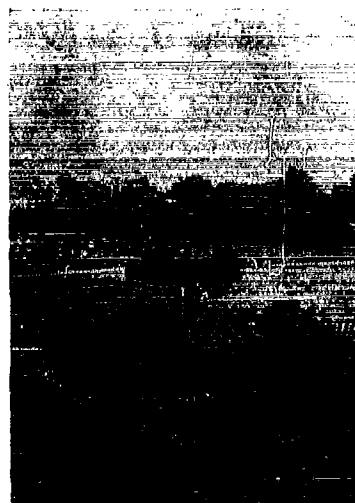


Figure 20 (U)
M113s use a major canal in the vicinity
of Ninh Quoi as a route of communication.

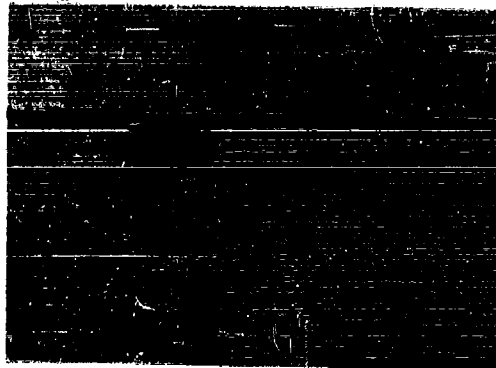


Figure 21 (U)

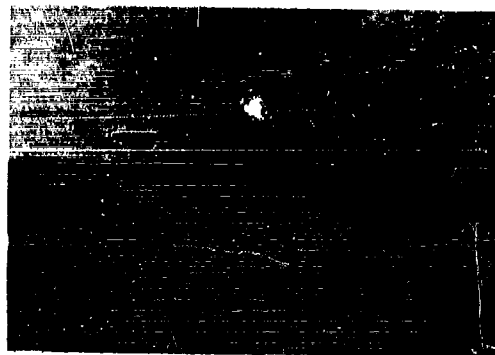


Figure 22 (U)

M113s traverse water-filled paddies at speeds of 8 to 15 mph.

III - Ninh Quoi

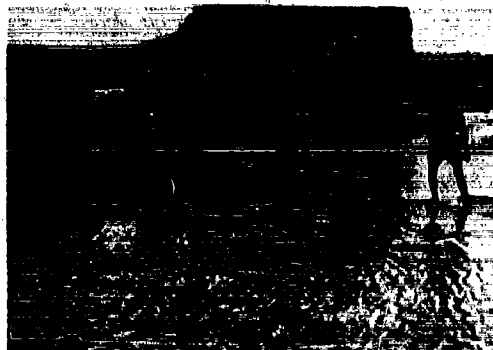


Figure 23 (U)
Canal crossing site in vicinity of Ninh Quoi.



Figure 24 (U)

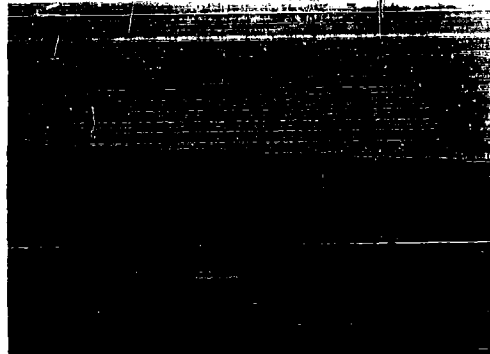


Figure 25 (U)
M113s fan out to flush VC spotted by O-1.

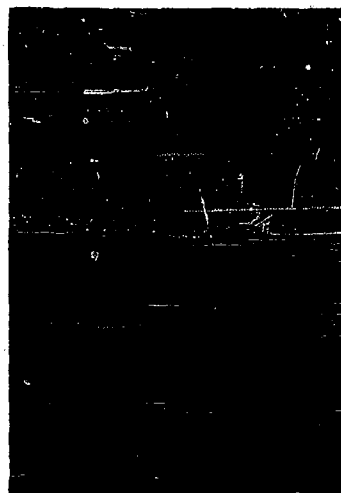


Figure 26 (U)

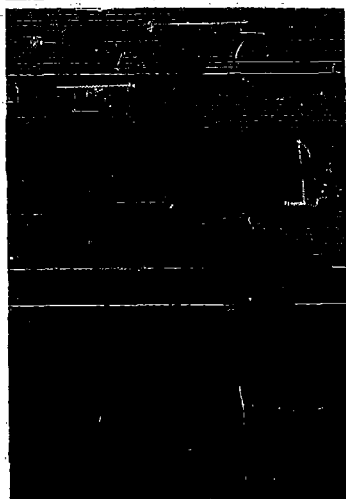


Figure 27 (U)
Troop crosses final canal prior to objective.

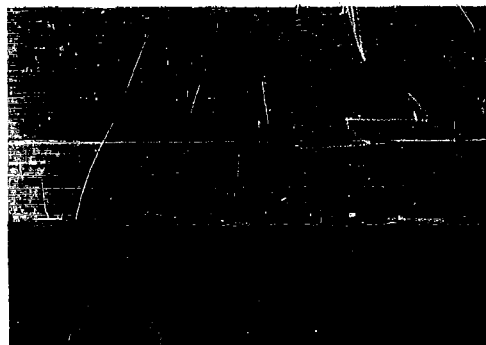


Figure 28 (U)
Troop moves forward to Objective 2 (tree line).

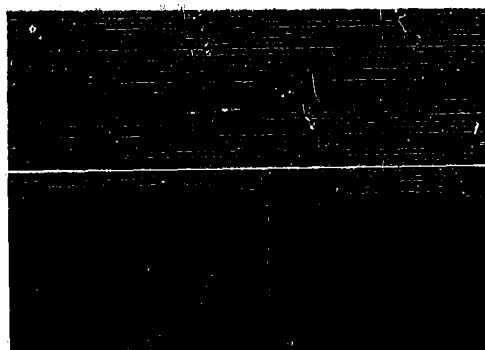


Figure 29 (U)
Troop moves forward to Objective 2 (tree line).

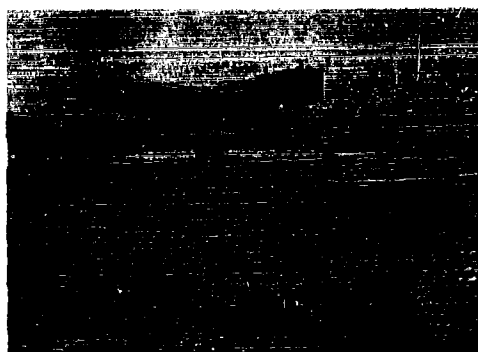


Figure 30 (U)
H-21 Helicopter delivers fuel via sling load.

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IV (C) OPERATION CHO CU CHI

A. (U) INTRODUCTION

On 24-25 October 1963 the 4th Mechanized Troop, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron (hereafter referred to as the 4/2) participated in an operation approximately 8 km west of Tan An (XS 5065) on the Saigon-My Tho highway. Figure 31, p 35, shows disposition of units and highlights of the action. The participating units were as follows:

1. 7th Infantry Division Headquarters
2. 11th Infantry Regiment Headquarters
3. 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment (hereafter referred to as 1/11)
4. 4/2 Mechanized Troop
5. Civil Guard Battalion
6. 105mm Howitzer Battalion(-)

The 4/2 was ordered to road march from My Tho to join the 1/11 in the vicinity of coordinates XS 4762. The 1/11 commander planned to attack Objective 11 with two dismounted rifle companies. The 4/2 with the 3d Rifle Company of 1/11 mounted would act as the reserve or finishing force. Results of the operation were as follows:

1. Friendly losses: 4/2 KIA - none
4/2 WIA - 4
1/11 KIA - 4
1/11 WIA - 16
2. Enemy losses: KIA - 70 (unconfirmed)
WIA - unknown
POW - 3
Suspects - 12
3. Materials captured: 2 BARS
1 Russian Carbine
1 US Carbine
1 US Enfield or O3
1 MAS 36
1 57mm RR mount
1 Combination tool for 57mm RR
3 57mm RR HEAT rounds
3 57mm RR empty shell cases
1 AT mine (10 kilos)

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B. (C) NARRATIVE

The operation was a reaction to VC activity that began on 23 October. The VC ambushed a patrol from a Self Defense Corps (SDC) Post, XS 455649 (located in the northern edge of Objective 57), at approximately 1730 on 23 October. The post was reinforced by approximately 15 SDC from a hamlet in the area. At 2000 on 23 October the VC attacked the post itself. A relieving Civil Guard (CG) Company from Tan Hiep (XS 475550) was ambushed by the VC (XS 458634) at about 2300. The CG company broke contact and withdrew 1000 meters to the east. On 24 October at 0700, a province operation was initiated to attack the treeline in the vicinity of Objective 56. Two CG companies and one ranger company were employed. At 1045 this force became engaged near the treeline of Objective 56. Once more they withdrew to the east. At 1145 aerial observation reported approximately 200 armed VC in the treeline in the vicinity of Objectives 11 and 56. Planning for a division operation in this area was begun on the morning of the 24th. No VN or US advisor personnel of the 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron participated in the planning.

The 4/2 had been ordered to present a mobility-and-firepower demonstration of the M113 for the British Ambassador to RVN and the United Kingdom Army Chief of Staff. This demonstration, in which eight M113s took part, was presented at 1200 on 24 October east of My Tho near coordinates XS 420455. The M113-mounted weapons used in the demonstration were a flamethrower, single and dual Cal .30 machine guns, a Cal .50 machine gun, and a 57mm RR. At the conclusion of the demonstration (about 1220) the troop commander was informed that his troop was to prepare for an operation.

The 4/2 departed My Tho at 1330 and marched to the designated line of departure without incident. With minimum confusion, the troop was attached to the infantry battalion and received the rifle company as planned. This task force moved west across the line of departure with two deployed rifle companies abreast. The 4/2, reinforced, moved by bounds, remaining on the average 400 meters behind the leading edge of the rifle companies. Because the riflemen were moving across inundated rice paddies their forward progress was necessarily slow. If the battalion commander and 4/2 troop commander were aware of the VC activity that had taken place in this area before their arrival that day and the night before, they are to be severely criticized for their direct approach to Objective 11. A translation of the 7th Division operation order (each commander had a copy) stated "There are 200 VC at Objectives 56 and 57." The task force struck Objective 11 from almost due east rather than from the SE as ordered. The CG battalion advanced in a deployed formation on the right flank and abreast of the task force toward Objective 56.

At approximately 1505, when the leading riflemen of the task force and CG battalion were about 50 meters from their respective treelines, the VC opened fire. A tremendous volume of automatic, small arms, and rifle grenade fire was directed at the dismounted riflemen. The leading two rifle companies of 1/11 became "pinned-down" and the CG battalion withdrew toward the east about 400 meters.

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After some argument between the infantry battalion commander and the 4/2 troop commander, the M113s assaulted Objective 11 at about 1530. The carriers were prevented from entering the objective because of an irrigation canal that ran the entire length and immediately in front of the tree line.

The 4/2 moved forward, on-line, and stopped 50 to 100 meters from the tree line, whereupon they directed Cal .50, Cal .30 (both single and dual-mounted) fire into Objective 11. The volume of VC fire did not diminish. One M113 was struck twice by 57mm RR HEAT rounds: once in the shield immediately below its mounted 57mm RR and once in the front slope in the vicinity of the air cleaner. The 4/2 57mm RR gunner was wounded, but the M113 remained in action. Another M113 was penetrated in the upper right front side. The radiator was penetrated and the troop executive officer wounded in the stomach by a fragment blown off the inside of the carrier. A third M113 was penetrated in the front slope by a 57mm RR round immediately to the right of the driver's compartment. Some oil lines were severed. These last two M113s were put out of action temporarily. They were moved approximately 500 meters to the rear. Later that afternoon, oil lines from the M113 with a damaged radiator were removed and installed in the other disabled M113. The repaired M113 towed the other one to My Tho that evening.

The 4/2 troop commander believed he had spotted the VC 57mm RR position, but had difficulty communicating the information to the flamethrower M113. (Because of a faulty radio, the troop commander had had difficulty controlling the flamethrower M113 during the demonstration rehearsal and the demonstration that morning.) The flamethrower moved forward and directed half of its napalm at the wrong location. At about 1545, with utmost difficulty, the troop commander managed to communicate this error to the flamethrower M113, which then fired a few accurate bursts into the suspected 57mm RR position. In the meantime the flamethrower M113 was struck in the right front road wheel by the VC 57mm RR. The flamethrower M113 was sent forward alone to attack the 57mm RR. (After the operation, about 30 small-caliber bullet scars were found in the front slope of this vehicle).

The firepower advantage shifted to the task force at approximately 1545. The dismounted companies entered Objective 11 along with the riflemen of 4/2. Three M113s and approximately 60 riflemen swung to the left of the objective to envelop it from the south. Because of the volume of VC fire this force did not enter the objective. The volume of fire from this location diminished rapidly indicating that the VC had withdrawn. Since the CG battalion did not occupy or apply pressure on Objective 56, it is presumed that the VC withdrew to the north. It is not likely that they withdrew to the west because two VNAF AD-6s were striking Objective 21 during the action. Also, an O-1 aircraft had the open area between Objectives 11 and 56 under continuous observation. Accurate and continuous firing from 6 105 mm howitzers was directed at the northern route of withdrawal.

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The objective area was well organized by the VC who were dug in and had built earthen parapets on the front and both sides of their holes. The network of the holes was 5 to 10 meters into the tree line, and no VC were forward of the tree line. Each VC weapon position was in foliage that had been cleared up to 3 feet above the ground about 3 feet in width. The amount of clearance of foliage was restricted to only that necessary for observation and firing. Through these "windows" each VC had a sector of fire. This accounted for their blanketing the area forward of the tree line. Because they were back in the tree line with the minimum disturbance to vegetation, the individual VC firing positions could not be observed from the front. Gun flashes were hidden unless the weapon was pointed directly at the observer. Captured sketches that detailed the defensive positions indicated a good deal of thought and tactical appreciation of possible schemes of maneuver on the available terrain had been given to position preparation.

Objective 11 was considered secure at 1730. The task force rounded up 15 VC suspects and evacuated them. It was later determined that three were definitely VC: an officer, a young girl espionage agent, and a Saigon University student courier. Both the ARVN and US personnel stated that the VC detention of civilians in the battle position was a departure from custom.

A VNAF B-26 made several strikes on Objective 21 and its surroundings from 1715 to 1830. The task force began moving toward Objective 21 at 1815 using the same formation as it had previously. The M113s effected a canal crossing immediately west of Objective 11. The first M113 was pushed across by the second, using balk bridging as a ram. The second was pulled by the first and pushed by the third. Each of the succeeding carriers was pulled by the next two forward in line. Eleven carriers crossed in 20 minutes.

The VC had withdrawn from Objective 21 before the arrival of the task force. This objective was also heavily entrenched in the same manner as was Objective 11. However, there was no other evidence of VC. A search of Objective 21 netted many VC documents in various houses. The night passed without incident. ARVN artillery fired one-tube harassment and interdiction rounds every 3 to 5 minutes. On occasion a volley was fired at possible VC assembly points.

At 0830, 25 October, the infantry battalion moved toward Objective 31. Because of the many canals in the area, 4/2 returned to Objective 11 and then moved north toward Objective 57. The CG battalion occupied Objective 56 on the morning of the 25th. No further contact was made with the VC. The 4/2 was released at 1130 and returned to My Tho without incident, arriving at 1245.

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A recapitulation of the action at the VN tactical operations center in My Tho on 27 October confirmed the supposition that the VC had withdrawn from Objective 11 via Objective 56. Further, it was learned from VC POW interrogations that the entire VC 514th Battalion was in the area. Two companies reinforced with heavy weapons were on line at Objectives 11 and 56. The battalion (-) was in the vicinity of Objective 21. It was the intention of this battalion to create an incident (attack the SDC post) and ambush the relief element. They were surprised that an ARVN infantry battalion and ML13 troop had been dispatched to the area.

C. (C) FAVORABLE COMMENTS

1. Transition from an administrative mode (demonstration) to the combat operation mode was done rapidly. All vehicles were resupplied with gasoline and ammunition (including recharging the flame thrower), and the soldiers were fed within 30 minutes.

2. The attachment to the infantry battalion and reinforcement of 4/2 was efficient and rapid.

3. The task force moved across the open area in a deployment with maximum firepower to the front. In the opinion of the ACTIV observer, this deployment saved the task force from incurring more casualties than it did.

4. The personal courage of the individual ARVN soldier and junior leader is praiseworthy. These men made the final assault in a heavy rain-storm under conditions of severely restricted visibility.

5. The 81 mm mortars of 4/2 were put into action within 5 minutes after the task force was fired upon. Considering the facts that selection of base plate position is a problem, and it was raining heavily, this was excellent timing.

6. The meticulous searching of the objective areas by ARVN troops- including physical inspection of pools, haystacks, and structures- resulted in the capture of many VC prisoners and weapons and much VC material.

7. Selection of trafficable routes was good.

8. Artillery fire support was outstanding: it was prompt and accurate.

D. (C) UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS

1. The disagreement between the infantry battalion commander and the 4/2 troop commander resulted in costly delay. In the opinion of all US personnel present, had the assault of the objective been instituted sooner, more success would have been realized.

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2. The CG battalion's failure to assault and occupy Objective 56 doomed the prospect of gaining a substantial victory. The VC escape route was assured.

3. The apparent disregard by the ground commanders of intelligence on known VC in the area or, what may be worse, their lack of this knowledge, resulted in an attack on the strongest, rather than the weakest, point in the VC defense.

4. The failure to disengage 4/2 and envelop or bypass Objective 11 resulted in the VC's success in withdrawing virtually the entire VC 514th Battalion to the SW on the commercial canal.

5. The lack of communications between all US advisors on the ground (total of six, and one ACTIV observer) with US advisors at regiment and division seriously hampered the advisory effort. There was no way for either group to determine what was going on except by asking his VN counterpart. It is certain that not all information is passed under these conditions.

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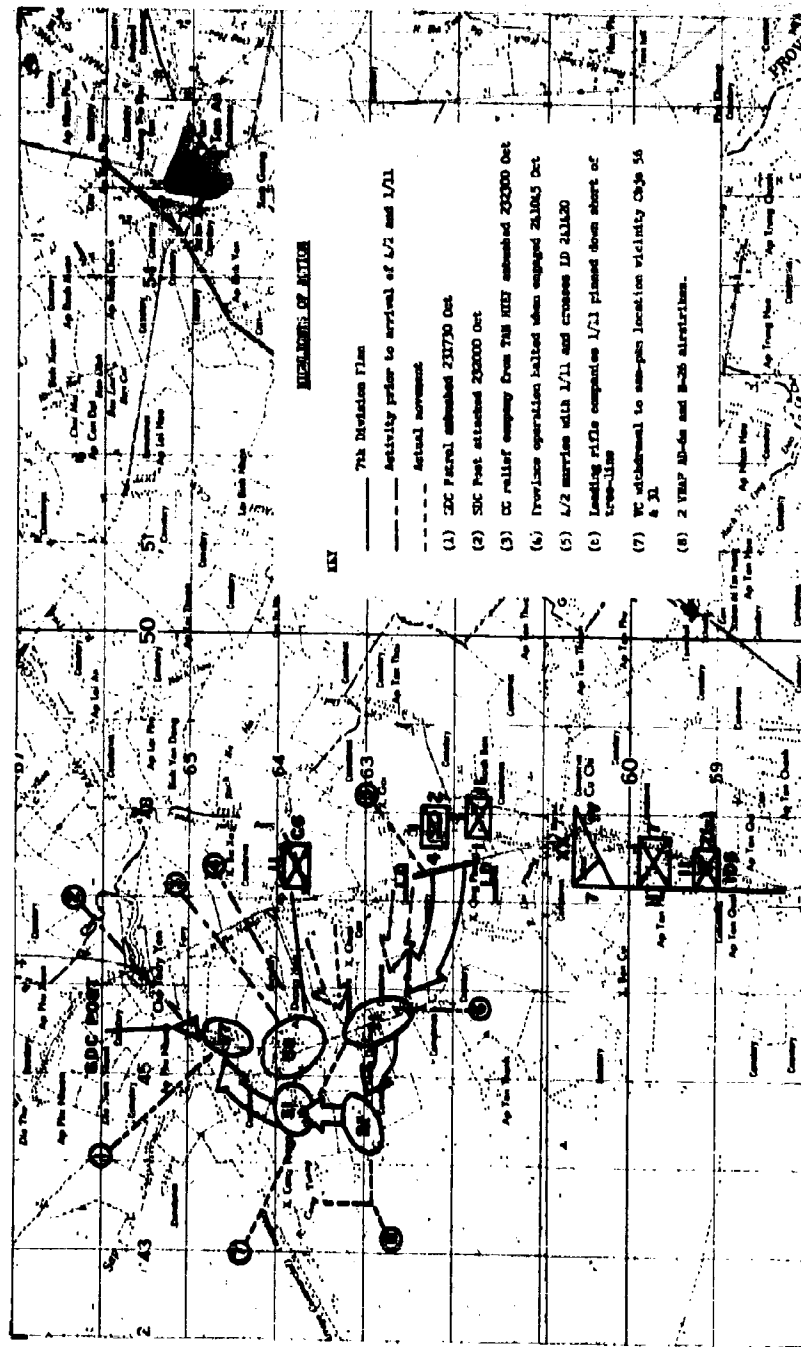


Figure 31
Operation Cho Cu Chi

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Figure 32 (U)
Maj Ba, 2d Armored Cavalry Squadron Commander briefs
British Ambassador to Vietnam and UK Army Chief of Staff.

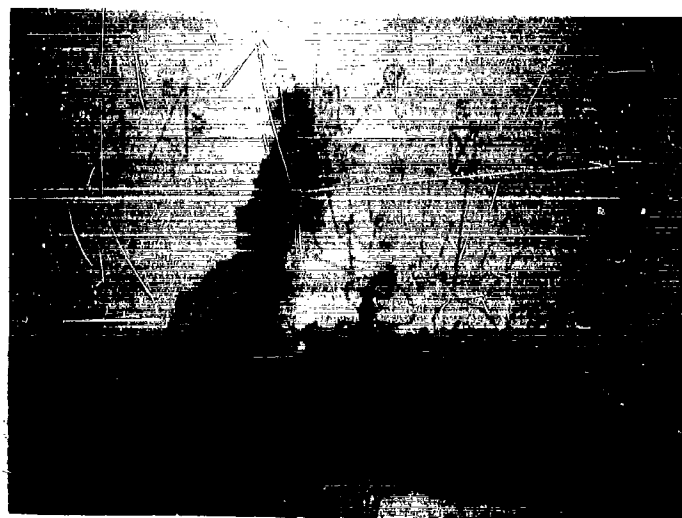


Figure 33 (U)
M113 mobility and firepower demonstration.

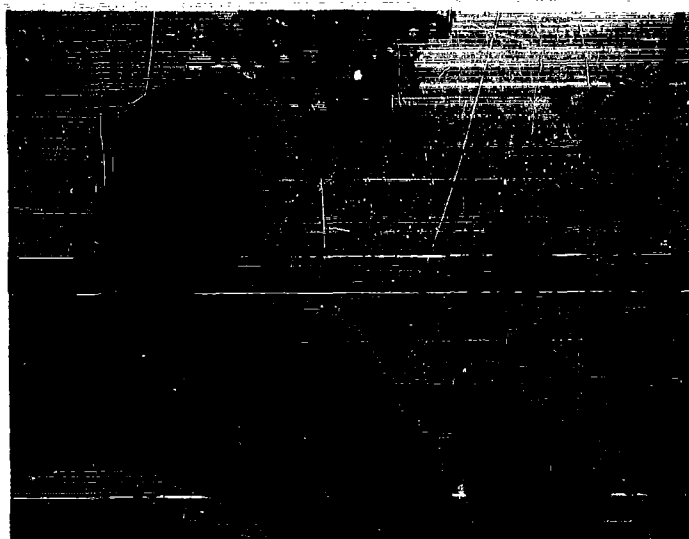


Figure 34 (U)

The 4/2 troop commander leads his troop to join 1/11 at the LD. Objective 11 is off the picture to the left about 1200 meters. The VC had an unrestricted view of these formations. This illustrates the bad habit of bunching.

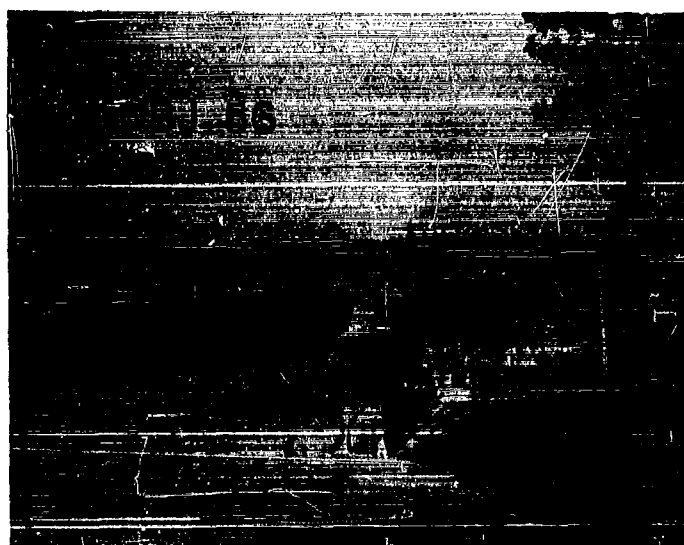


Figure 35 (U)

LD looking NW. A portion of Objective 56 is at left. Terrain was open rice paddy all the way to the objectives. M24 tanks could negotiate this terrain. (Note dismounted infantry advancing in deployed formation.)

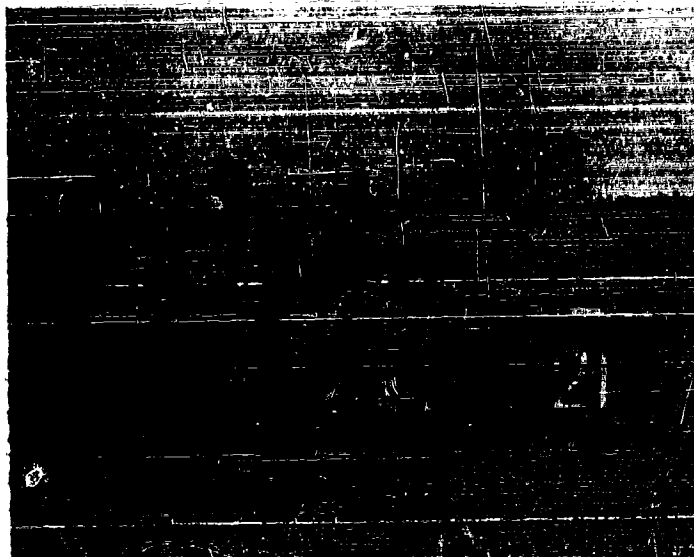


Figure 36 (U)
 Flamethrower M113 approaches Objective 11. This is typical manner of movement contact. Because of napalm bottles inside carrier, crewmen must ride on top. However, crewmen of other M113s habitually ride on top until fired upon.



Figure 37 (U)
 Objective 11. VC had at least one automatic weapon on each spur of crescent-shaped woodline facing oncoming task force. Objective 56 is to the right, off the photo. Objective 21 is toward the top, also off the photo. (Photo taken 3 days after operation.)

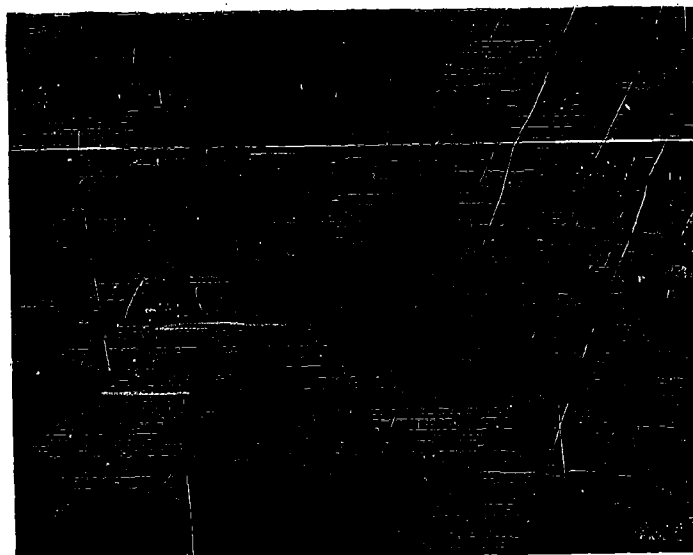


Figure 38 (U)
Aerial photo of Objective 11 looking from NNE. Canal is immediately forward of treeline. (Photo taken 3 days after operation.)



Figure 39 (U)
Results of artillery, mortars, and flamethrower on Objective 11.

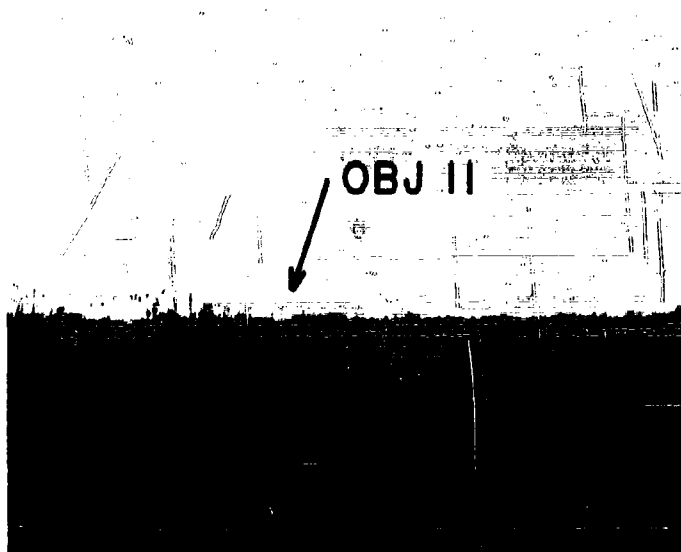


Figure 40 (U)
M113s assault Objective 11.

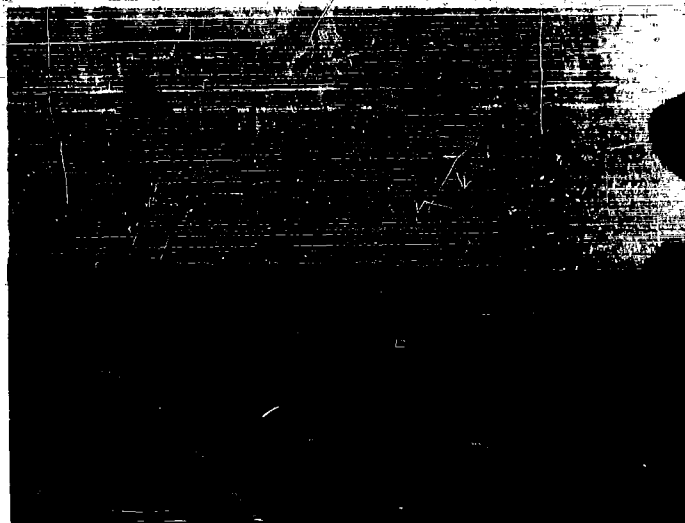


Figure 41 (U)
1/11 reserve company assaults Objective 11.

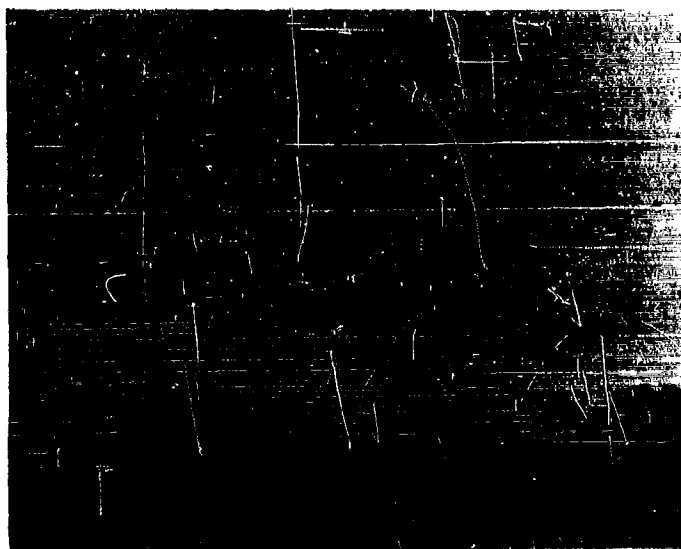


Figure 42 (U)
VNAF AD-6 strikes Objective 21 after task force reserve company
and M113 assault of Objective 11. Riflemen of two leading
companies shown here later entered Objective 21.

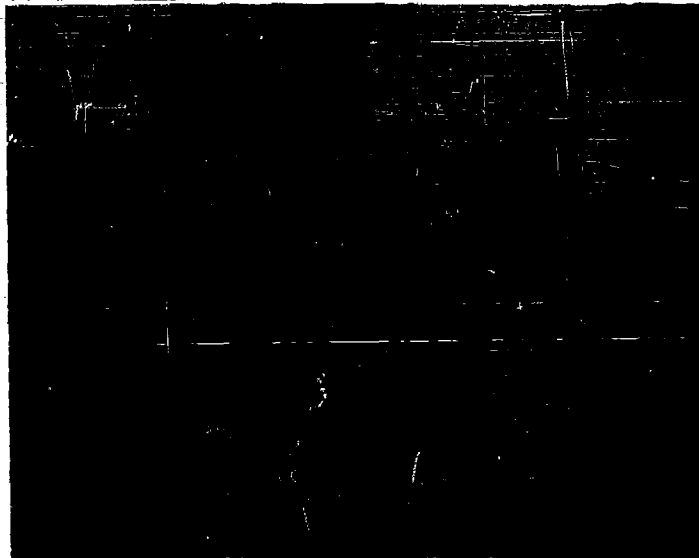


Figure 43 (U)
 Typical dug-in positions on Objective 11. Note closeness of
 holes and the distance back in the tree line. Photo taken
 facing east from objective toward oncoming task force.



Figure 44 (U)
 Dead VC behind fortification.

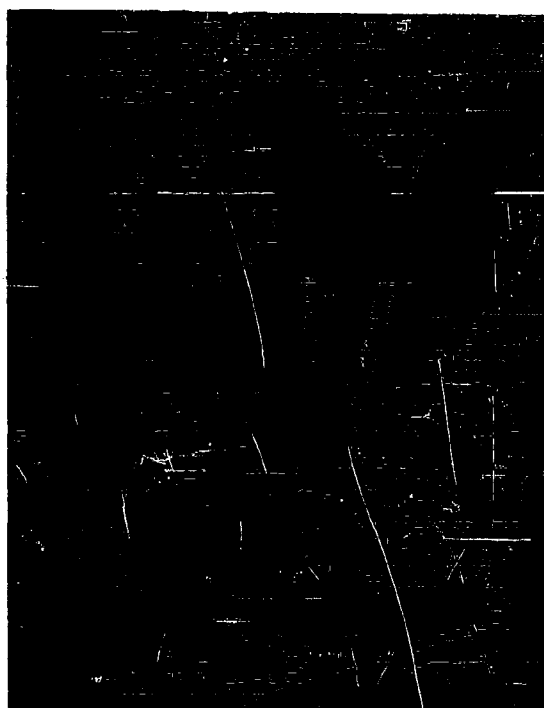


Figure 45 (U)
Dead VC being searched by 4/2 soldiers.

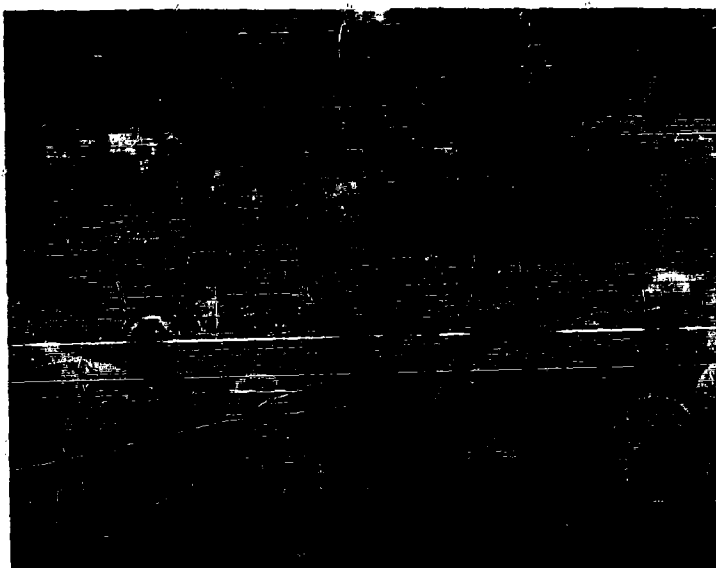


Figure 46 (U)
Southern edge of Objective 11 facing northeast. 1/11 riflemen
in foreground. VC suspects with arms tied and civilians in rear.

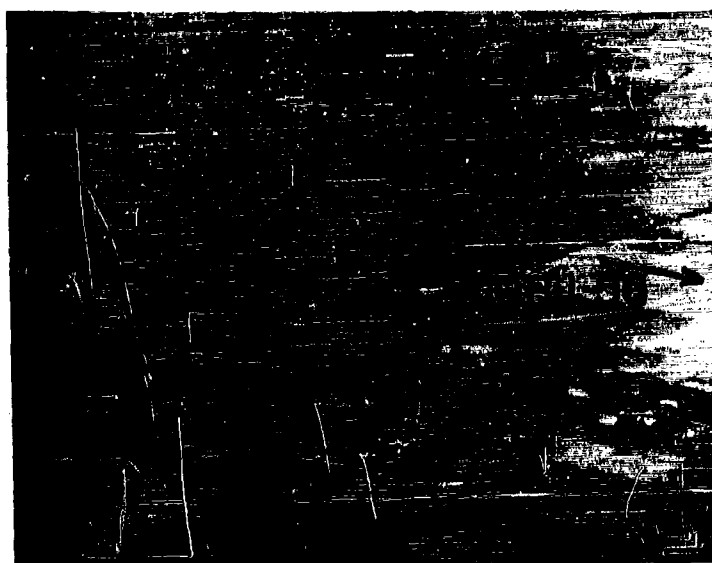


Figure 47 (U)
Objective 21 in foreground, Objective 31 and commercial canal, respec-
tively, in the background. It is believed the VC withdrew by sampan
through Objective 31 from Objective 21 and 56. (Photo taken 3 days after
operation.)

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Figure 48 (U)

Eastern portion of Objective 21. Multiple tracks through rice paddies in upper left show 4/2's movement from Objective 11 on 24 October. Single heavy track in center shows its movement back to Objective 11 on 25 October. (Photo taken 3 days after operation.)



Figure 49 (C)

M113 Nr 43 showing hit in 57mm RR shield and welded hole on front slope above trim vane. The front slope was penetrated and the air cleaner damaged. (Photo taken one day after operation, 26 October.)

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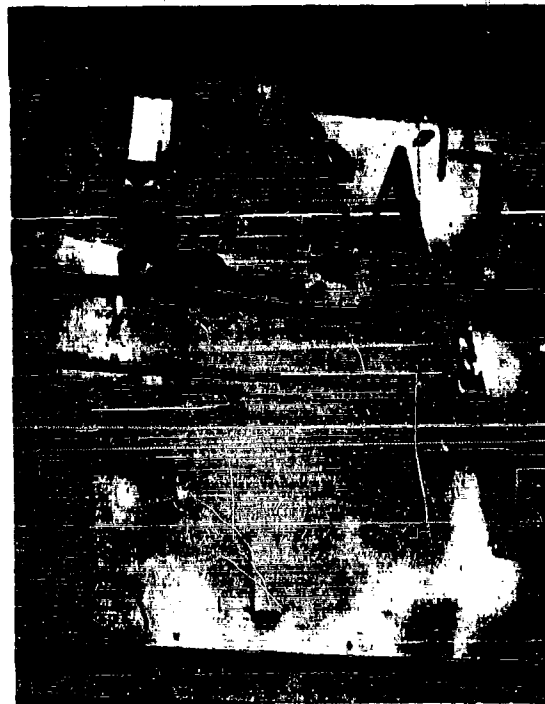


Figure 50 (C)
Another view of M113 Nr 43 shown in Figure 49.
(Photo taken one day after operation, 26 October.)

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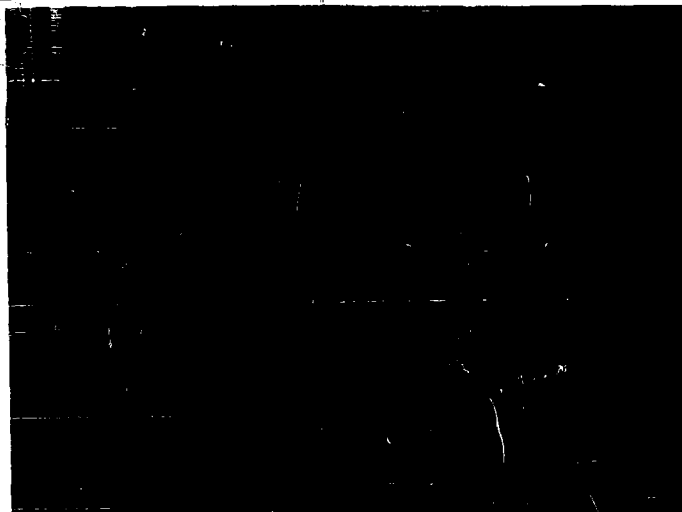


Figure 51 (C)
M113 Nr 201 penetrated in right side (hole welded); radiator damaged. The executive officer was wounded by a flying fragment inside the M113. The vehicle was towed back to My Tho by M113 Nr 12 (Figures 53 and 54) on 24 October. (Photo taken one day after operation.)



Figure 52 (C)
Right front road wheels of M113 Nr 21 (flamethrower) penetrated by 57mm RR. Not discovered until 4/2 returned to My Tho. (Photo taken one day after operation, 26 October.)

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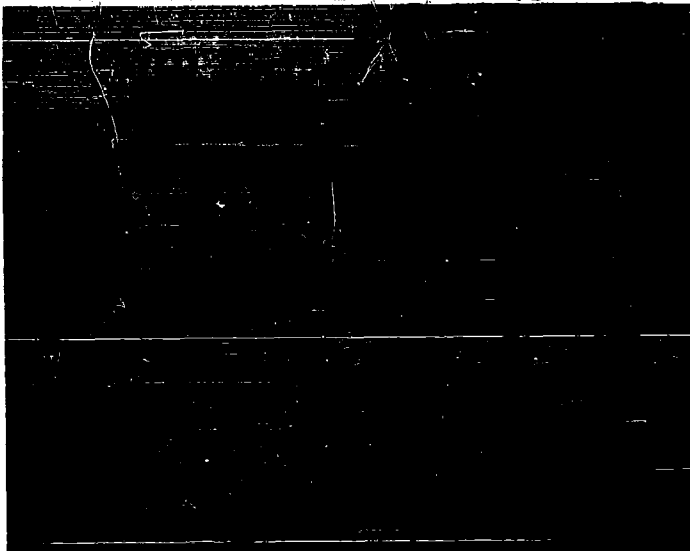


Figure 53 (C)

M113 Nr 12 hit in hinge of front slope and penetrated. Driver wounded; vehicle put out of action. Necessary repair parts were taken from M113 Nr 201 (Figure 49 and 50). M113 Nr 12 towed M113 Nr 201 to My Tho on 24 October. (Photo taken one day after operation.)

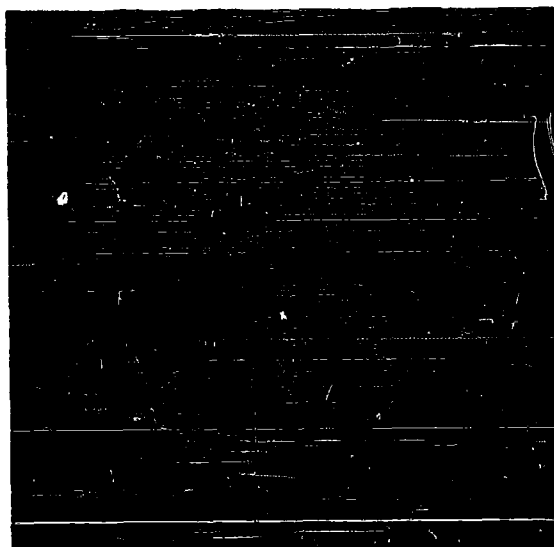


Figure 54 (C)

Another view of M113 Nr 12. (Photo taken one day after operation, 26 October.)

IV - Cho Cu Chi

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ANNEX A (C)
IV CORPS G-2 INTELLIGENCE REPORT

A-1

ANNEX A

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O 140900Z

FM IV CORPS G-2

TO UUMSA/COMUSMACV,

UUMSGA/G-2ADV 7th DIV,

UUMSGE/G-2 ADV 9th DIV

UUMSGB/G-2 ADV 21ST DIV

KIN (C O N F I D E N T I A L) SPHINX MSG CITE: 2 SCR 57.

(K) (C) THE FOLLOWING REPT RECEIVED FM IV CORPS SMIAT, IS FORWARDED FOR YOU INFO:

QUOTE DATE OF INFO: 9 OCT 63 AREA: KIEN AN DIST, YIEN GIANG PROVINCE
SOURCE: IS A COCED AGENT RESIDING IN THE AREA WHO OBTAINED THIS INFORMATION BY PERSONNEL OBSERVATION.

8 OCT 63, BA GU, A PROVINCIAL COMMISSAR OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE LIBERATION FRONT, MADE THE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENTS TO THE POPULATION OF HOC HOA HAMLET (WR 160 780): QUOTE COMMUNIST CHINA HAS JUST PROVIDED US WITH 42 ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS. PRESENTLY, IN THIS AREA WE HAVE EMPLACED AT THE XEO CAN 3 WAY ROAD INTERSECTION (WR 193 764). PLEASE GO OBSERVE IT AND BE CONFIDENT THAT FROM NOW ON BOTH OUR PEOPLE AND TROOPS WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO FEAR THE EN'S AIRCRAFT. UNQUOTE

AT 1300 HOURS ON 8 OCT 63, SOURCE OBSERVED THE WPN AT THE ABOVE MENTIONED LOC AND GAVE THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF IT:
THE BORE IS APPROX 40 MM, THE LENGTH OF THE BARREL IS APPROX 2 FT 30 METERS, AND 3 LEGS HOLD THE GUN. THE GUN IS A DARK GREY IN COLOR AND ON THE 3 LEGS MOUNT THERE IS A FOUND PLACE THAT CAN BE SWIVELLED IN ANY DIRECTION. THERE ARE 6 MEN TAKING CARE OF THE WPN. IT FIRES 3 TYPES OF RDS, ABOUT 40 CMS LONG, AS BIG AROUND AS A WRIST, AND WITH AN OVAL SHAPED HEAD. THE HEADS OF THE 3 DIFFERENT RDS ARE PAINTED RED, WHITE OR BLACK. THE WPN IS LOADED FM THE TOP OF THE BREACH WITH A 5 RD MAGAZINE BY A MAN STANDING ON THE ROUND METAL PLATE. THE MAGAZINE IS CURVED AND THE WPN IS FIRED BY FOOT: (NOTE: PROB BY DEP-PRESSING A PEDAL). THE MEN TAKING CARE OF THE WPN ARE ARMED WITH THOMPSONS.

PARA SOURCE OVERHEARD BA GU TALKING WITH SOME OTHER CADRES AT THE SITE OF THE GUN THAT BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR THE RV PLAN TO LIBERATE THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC ROUTS: THE ROAD FM GO QUAO TO DINH AN (WR 309 754) AND THE WATERWAY FM XEO RO (KIEN AN DISTRICT TO THU LL. IV CORPS G-2 SDV CMT: NO ADD INFO IS IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE SMIAT WILL REINTEROGATE AGENT TO OBTAIN MORE SPECIFIC INFO. SMIAT EVALUATBIN CGQR

FOXTROT DASWMSIG. GP -4.

A-3

ANNEX A

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ANNEX B (C)

TERMINAL ACTION REPORT ON M113 DESTROYED 9 SEPTEMBER 1963

1. (U) INTRODUCTION

This annex constitutes final reporting action on the M113 APC destroyed in the vicinity of Go Cong on 9 September 1963. The incident was discussed in Interim Test Report Number 8. Portions of the hull shown in Figures B-1 through B-12 have been shipped to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, for analysis of weldments. Such analysis is believed essential to determine whether or not weldments meet specifications, and what modifications to specifications, if any, should be made to provide increased strength to the hull.

2. (C) NARRATIVE

The M113 APC destroyed on 9 September 1963 during a combat operation in the Mekong Delta (IV Corps) area of Vietnam was the lead vehicle in a column of 12 M113s traveling over a gravel surfaced road. Three actions occurred almost simultaneously:

a. A mine was electrically detonated directly in front of the vehicle. No known vehicular damage occurred.

b. A mine was electrically detonated under the left rear of the vehicle, damaging the road wheel, track, and sponson.

c. The vehicle was struck on the upper front slope by a 57mm HEAT round which penetrated the engine compartment access door.

The troop commander, riding in the 4th vehicle in column, ordered the damaged vehicle moved into a rice paddy adjacent to the road. The vehicle moved unassisted approximately 35 meters into the paddy. A gasoline fire started in the rice paddy outside the vehicle and spread quickly to the sponson. The troop commander immediately ordered the burning vehicle evacuated. Before the men could get out, the fire spread to the interior of the vehicle. While escaping, the men were burned to various degrees. Within 3 to 5 minutes after the fire started, several violent explosions literally tore the vehicle apart. The roof, floor plate, and engine compartment access door were completely blown from the vehicle. The ramp was blown into the open position. Sides were splayed out at a 45 degree angle. The M113 burned for approximately one hour thereafter. The vehicle was subsequently further dismantled by ARVN troops using TNT blocks. Evacuation was by 2 1/2-ton truck. The pieces were taken to the 80th Ordnance Rebuild Depot in Saigon, where they were steam cleaned and examined.

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3. (C) FINDINGS

An examination of the destroyed vehicle by the unit advisor and qualified ordnance personnel resulted in the following findings:

a. The mine that detonated directly in front of the vehicle did not contribute to the destruction of the vehicle.

b. The 57mm HEAT penetration did not immobilize the M113 nor contribute to the fire.

c. The mine detonated under the vehicle damaged the fourth road wheel and the track above the road wheel. A hole in the left sponson indicates that a small fragment from the mine or the damaged track penetrated the sponson and ruptured the gas tank. The gasoline from the ruptured gas tank ignited.

d. The vehicle destruction was caused by a combination of the gas tank explosion and the ammunition detonation within the vehicle. Listed below are the types and quantities of ammunition believed stored inside the vehicle.

1. Cal .50 MG 1800 rounds
2. Cal .30 MG - 2400 rounds
3. Cal .30 M1 - unknown
4. Cal .30 Carbine - unknown
5. BAR - 1000 rounds
6. M-26 grenades - 50

e. The clean separation of the hull joints caused by the explosion of the gas tank and the stowed ammunition indicates a lack of weld penetration.

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Figure B-1 (C)
Road wheel and track damage caused by the mine. A piece
of the mine or track penetrated the sponson above the
damaged area.

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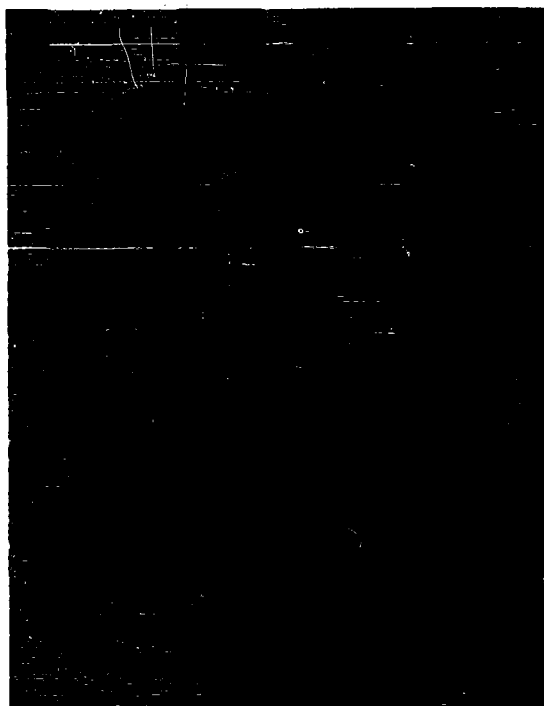


Figure B-2 (C)
Road wheel damaged by mine.

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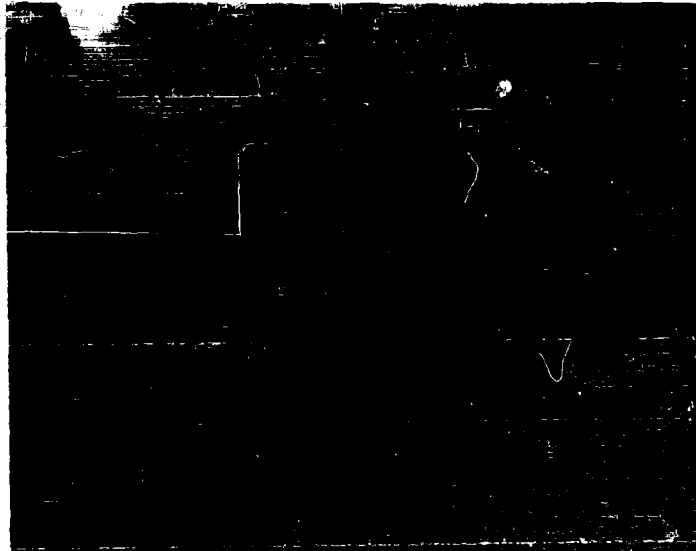


Figure B-3 (C)
Track block damaged by mine. Shrapnel from this block may have been the cause of the sponson penetration.

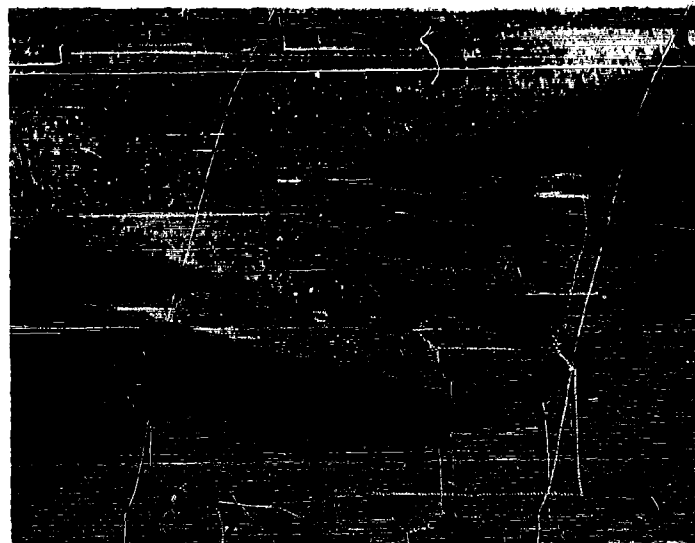


Figure B-4 (C)
The roof was blown intact from the vehicle

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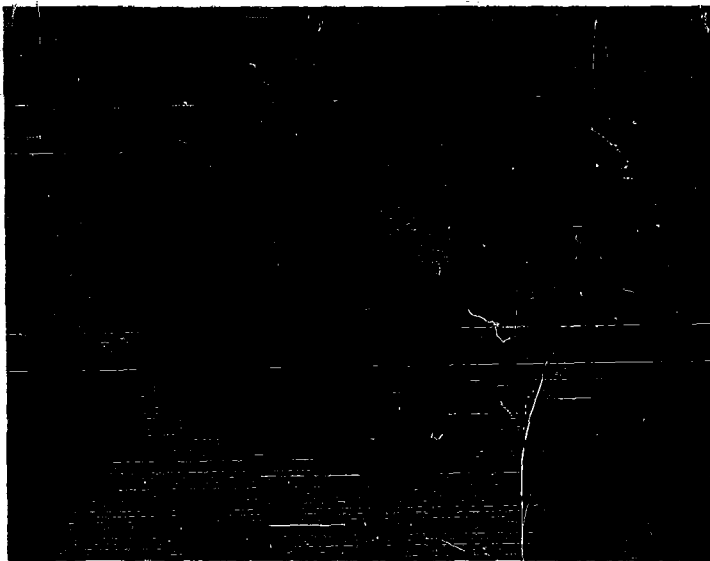


Figure B-5 (C)
The floor was blown from the vehicle. Note the position of the torsion bars in relation to the floor. The ramp was blown into the open position.



Figure B-6 (C)
The sponson was penetrated, rupturing the gasoline tank.

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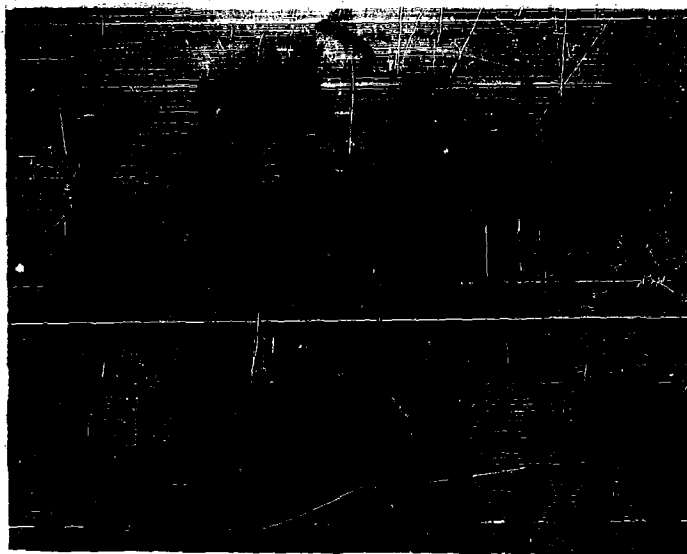


Figure B-7 (C)
The vehicle side plates separated at the welded joints and splayed out at a 45° angle. The engine compartment door was completely blown from the vehicle.

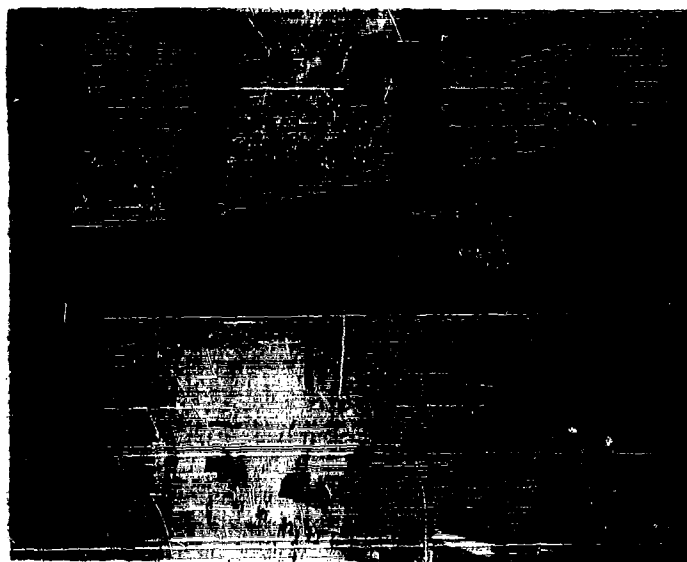


Figure B-8 (C)
View of the roof and side plate showing clean weld separation.

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Figure B-9 (C)
Clean separation of the roof from the side plate. View
of the roof as it separated from the side plate.



Figure B-10 (C)
View of weld separation (see arrow).

ANNEX B

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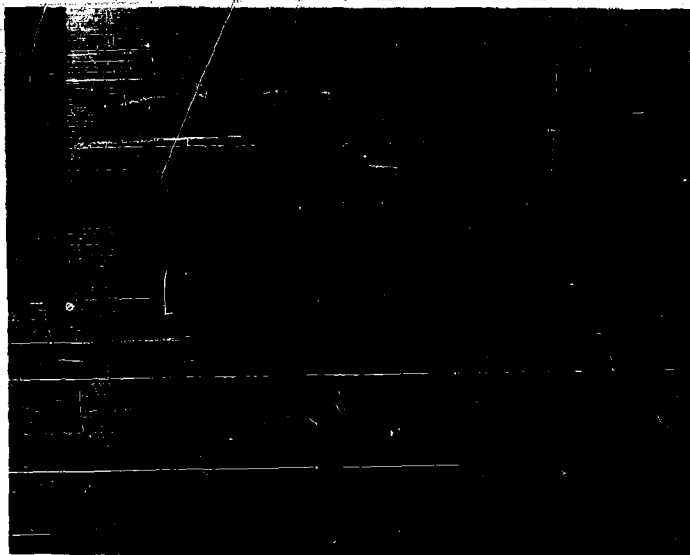


Figure B-11 (C)
Clean separation between box beam and floor
plate on right side of the vehicle.

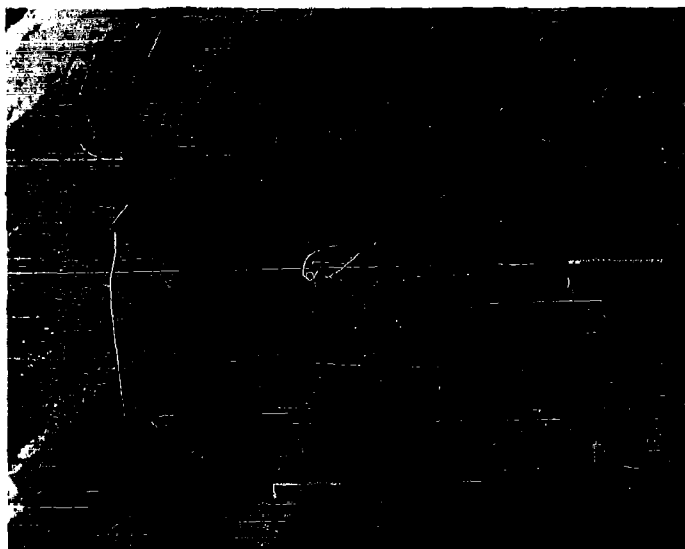


Figure B-12 (C)
Weld separation of floor from box beam.

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ANNEX C

CORPS AREA BOUNDARY CHANGES, RVN

C-1

ANNEX C

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Figure 1. Schematic representation of the experimental design. The subjects were divided into two groups: the control group and the experimental group. The control group was divided into two subgroups: the control group and the experimental group. The experimental group was divided into two subgroups: the control group and the experimental group.

17 TH PARALLEL



ANNEX C

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ANNEX D

REFERENCES

1. DA letter, AGAM-P (M) 381 (31 Oct 63) DCSOPS, subject: "Army Troop Test Program in Vietnam (U)," 6 November 1962, as amended.
2. ACTIV letter (to CGUSARCDC), subject: "Plan of Test, Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113)," 28 November 1962.
3. ACTIV letter (to CINCPAC through COMUSMACV), subject: "Summary of Test Plan for Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113)," 3 December 1962.
4. CINCPAC message, subject: "Proposal for US Army Test in Vietnam," DTG 2202216Z (January 1963).
5. Monthly Test Reports Numbers 1-8, Mechanized Rifle Troop (M113) (U), Army Concept Team in Vietnam.

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ANNEX E

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